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ABSTRACT

The final report of Project OPEN Child Service Demonstration Center, a program designed for identification and instruction of junior high learning disabled students, summarizes project goals and achievements in screening methods, staff training, educational planning, and pupil performance. (CL)

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Project OPEN 1974-1975 Child Service Demonstration Center

TITLE VI - GC ESEA FINAL REPORT

East Junior High School - Brockton Public Schools - Brockton, Mass.

The "Project OPEN" CSDC LD program had three major goals. They were as follows:

1. to develop screening and diagnostic procedures with which to identify learning disabled students at the junior high level.

2. to develop an instruction program delivery system designed to service LD students at the junior high level.

3. to demonstrate and disseminate a replicate model of a junior high LD program in Massachusetts in conformance with the guidelines of Chapter 766.

"Project OPEN" operated for a single year, as the second year continuation of Title VI-G grant awarded to a consortium of schools in East Massachusetts. Title VI-G support for that consortium, known as Project HEED, was terminated after the first year, and the remaining year of a two year award was given to the Brockton Public Schools. In several areas, particularly screening and testing, it was possible to continue the work of the first year with little interruption.

"Project OPEN", within that first year, was able to accomplish substantial achievement of goals 1 & 2, the development and refinement of procedures for identification and service of LD students at the junior high level. In addition, the project made significant progress in prepararing itself and receiving agencies throughout the state for its subsequent role in dissemination and replication of the junior high program developed.

Goal 1 - to develop screening and diagnostic procedures with which to identify learning disabled students at the junior high level.

Distinct screening and diagnostic procedures were developed to be used in series. The screening process was designed to provide a quiet and efficient method with which a large pool of junior high pupils could be screened for possible LD by classroom teachers. The three main parameters upon the development of screening process were:

(1) applicable by classroom teachers with little or not require orientation or training, (2) no direct testing of pupils either individually or in group administrations, and (3) accurate identification of the pool of pupils for whom further diagnostic appraisals would be indicated.

A preliminary screening instrument was developed during the first year of Project HEED. This original instrument consisted of fifty-three items, designed to provide an assessment of student performances in eight modalities - auditory, visual, memory, vocal expression, written expression, comprehensive, motor, and personal/social skills. A profile chart of screening inventory scores was prepared for each student, with a score corresponding to each of the eight modalities. On the basis of the profile, students were classified as (1) needing further diagnosis, (2) borderline, or (3) no diagnosis required.

The screening mechanism was refined and validated

Data from the screening inventory was used to identify a pool of students for whom further diagnosis may be appropriate. Additional data on those pupils so identified is assembled, including current achievement data, behavioral observations, psychometric evaluations (WISE and Wide Range Achievement Tests selected students), medical and educational history, and teacher interview data. On the basis of all of the above, students are chosen for a full diagnostic appraisal. Diagnostic Program activities were carried out as follows:

1. Parents are notified of the referral and permission is requested to proceed with the testing.

2. Individual parent conferences are held as requested.

3. The following battery of tests (all or selected portions) are administered.

   Detroit Test of Learning Aptitude

   Berry Buktenela Test of Visucal Motor Integration

   Wepman Test of Auditory Discrimination

   Gold - Fristoe Auditory Discrimination Test

   Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

   Botel Reading Inventory

   Gates - MacGinities Reading Tests

4. Test results are evaluated.

5. Parent Conference is conducted.

Core Evaluation Team meeting is held and educational program plans are formulated.

Goal 2 - to develop an instructional program delivery systems designed to service LD students at the junior high level.

The principal tenet upon which the instructional program was based is the primacy of the regular teachers in the delivery of an educational program. Efforts to achieve this objective were:

1. in-service education for regular language arts teachers

2. development of specific educational profiles and programs for each child to be implemented jointly by the resource room and classroom teachers.

STAFF TRAINING

Workshops were held with the project director, the building principal, language arts department head, and five language arts teachers. In-service continued during the school year with the same participants plus two additional language arts teachers, and their new staff members. Data collected indicated that the in-service program offered was most effective, with participants in full schedule scoring an average 97 out of 109 possible point on the test given. Observation offered in an open ended comment section indicate a dramtically increased awareness of the problems and needs of students with LD, and a feeling of confidence by teachers in their newly acquired skills in providing for those students.

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The process of developing an indivdual student educational program centered around two sets of evaluation data:

1. a profile of perceptual strengths ard weakness and,

2. a series of specific cognitive performance objectives in language art.

The project director, consultants, and the LD tutor prepared the Learning Disabilities Report. This document contained:

1. WISE and WRAT scores

2. A statement of perceptual strengths and weakness as identified by the diagnostic battery

3. A statement of possible effects that the identified disabilities may have upon school performance, and

4. Specific pedagogical recommendations.

A series of behavioral objectives in language arts was selected for each pupil. A lengthy list of objectives corresponding to the language arts curriculum was prepared by the project staff and the coordinator of language arts. The language arts teachers and the LD tutor identified a subset of these objectives for each pupil. Prescriptive Reading Inventory Interim Tests were administered to test each pupil mastery of each objective. Then a select list of objectives were prepared, with responsibility for instruction in each objective given to either the language arts teachers, the LD tutor, or both.

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF PUPIL PERFORMANCE

Participating students were assessed pre & post in the following areas:

Auditory and visual perception

Reading

Language Arts

School grades

Attitudes and Behavior

Participation in the program has resulted in a significant improvement in both the visual and auditory perceptual abilities.

The Gates-MacGinities Reading tests were administered prior to and at the conclusion of the instructional program. Mean Pre-test grade equivalents in Vocabulary and Comprehensive at the fourth grade level are indicative of the entry level of the students. Increase of one year six months and one year seven months in vocabulary and comprehension, and two years five months in speed and accuracy are dramatic evidence of the effectiveness of the instructional program. These data are particulary encouraging because the mean interval between pre and post testing was less than seven months. At this rate, the students average two months growth in reading level for every month in the program.

School grades in language arts were examined to determine if the program was resulting in improvement.

Goal 3 - to demonstrate and disseminate a replicable model of a junior high learning disability program in Massachusetts in conformance with qualities of Chapter 766.

Project Open has succeeded in developing an effective program for LD students at the junior high level. From screening and diagnosis, through staff training and implementation of the instructional program, the project has successfully integrated them into a functional productive model program.

The project director and media specialist have prepared much of the necessary descriptive material, and have given presentations to a large number of inquiring agencies.

It is expected that succeeding years of the project will be required to objectively test the replicability of the model, for other schools and school systems, and to disseminate the program as widely as is appropriate.